(YOU SHOULD) TAKE IT WITH YOU

A CREATIVE PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF FINE ART

BY

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ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: *(You Should) Take It With You*

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(You Should) Take It with You is a site-specific installation that explores the shift in family dynamics that occurs after the death of a loved one. This exhibit consists of three separate spaces that the viewer can explore. Utilizing nuclear cooling tower imagery, I examine communication with the dead through repetitive clouds of smoke with occult symbols that also function as access points of interaction with the deceased. This work is a method of mourning for me and a means of revealing family secrets that led to a dysfunctional family unit.

The installation contains a family table with plate settings made from copper, vitreous enamel, bronze, and stretch-knit fabrics. There are multiple embroideries in another space that hang from the wall. Throughout all three space are altered or cast uranium glass objects. Uranium glass is glass containing uranium oxide. While containing a low level of radiation, it is not dangerous. However, it glows green under ultraviolet light and creates a sense of unease.

These rooms are idealized and misremembered versions of childhood homes. Viewers are encouraged to investigate the spaces to reveal vulnerable truths about my own family's dysfunction. In the visual revelations of these secrets, this project aims to connect with viewers who have also dealt with loss and the changes that come with it, as well as open a dialogue about loss, grief, and why family secrets are locked away.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In this project, I explore my sense of home and how it is affected by the loss of a loved one through grief and mourning. Coming from a dysfunctional environment with two alcoholic parents changed my perception of home prior to any losses I suffered. After a death in my family, my views of domestic spaces were further strained, as I had lost someone who was consistent, comforting, and safe. Therapy groups for adult children of alcoholics introduced me to the phrase "airing out the dirty laundry" in relation to family secrets. Families often keep addictions or problems in the home hidden from the outside world because of the shame or denial associated with them. Revealing these secrets is not something that is often done because it makes family members uncomfortable and embarrasses those with the addictions but talking about this dysfunction is the only way to truly heal.

This project is, in many ways, a method of dealing with my grief. When I lost my grandmother, who had served as another parent to my brother and me, we found ourselves without purpose having cared for her for many years. We lost a central figure in our lives that connected us and had made our broken down home worth living in.

I began questioning what exactly home was without the people I had lost and whether or not I still felt like I had a place in my home after it essentially became a tomb for my grandmother and her memories. For this creative project, I created three scenes –quiet, memorialized, and even misremembered– in a contained space that became a part of the ideal images of a home to which I was clinging.

Everyone who lives long enough will feel loss. My encounters, however specific, are not individually unique. By placing this work into the public space, I hope to open a dialogue for viewers about family dysfunction, how we grieve, and why it is not often discussed.

I am also interested in memories, remembering, and forgetting because I often do not trust my own memories to be correct. When I am designing my work, I often ask myself if my younger brother's perception of these reconstructed spaces would be the same as mine. Rebecca Rupp's book, *Committed to Memory: How We Remember and Why We Forget,* likens the mind to an incubator and states, "Memory can abruptly realign and reverse itself…A sudden change of heart or an influx of new information can rewrite the past, revising memories to mesh with the new mindset."[1] There is something fascinating in this act of misremembering that I feel deserves to be explored further.

My grandfather worked for many years in nuclear power plants. One of the main plants he worked at was Three Mile Island, known for being the site of America's closest nuclear meltdown. Over many years, my grandfather was exposed to large amounts of asbestos that eventually resulted in his death; however, more than a decade before he died, he began experiencing dementia that did not manifest in any of his other family members. This led me to question whether he had been exposed to more than asbestos in these nuclear plants. The nuclear cooling tower in my work is a symbol of my connection to the dead, as it originated from my attempts to uncover what had happened to my grandfather. After the meltdown of cooling tower two at Three-Mile Island, tower one was also shut down. There are four towers in total and, because they came in pairs, I draw them communicating with each other. The plumes of green smoke lead from one tower to the next.

After my grandfather died, I learned about many family secrets that I wished I had never heard, and I felt aged and weathered by these revelations because they tarnished my views on what I had perceived as the "healthier" sides of my family. In this betrayal (as it felt), I realized

[1] Rupp, Rebecca. *Committed to Memory: How We Remember and Why We Forget*. (New York, Crown Publishers, Inc. 1998) 171.

that keeping these secrets until death was what hurt because I would never be able to hear the deceased's side of the story. I decided I needed to make a body of work as a sense of closure. Through this process, I could let go not only to grief, but to these burdens I now carry.

My work is a mixture of metal, vitreous enamel, and fibers. I also implement kiln-sculpted glass techniques for sheet glass enameling and factory glass alteration. A uniting thread within all these media is the imagery I choose to use. All my work contains an illustrated narrative about dysfunction, grief, memory, and communication with the dead. In my vitreous enamel work, I use German China Paints: an enamel overglaze that is mixed with a ratio of anise and clear balsam of Copaiba oils. This allows me to draw fluidly on glassy surfaces using calligraphy tools and to achieve a crisp, opaque linework. This translates neatly onto my enameled surfaces, an important step in making sure handwriting of any size is clear.

For sheet glass or factory pressed glass alteration, I found the current kiln-sculpted enameling techniques available to me to be unsatisfactory for my linework. I began experimenting with this oil and China Paint mixture on sheet glass in order to create the same effects as it had with my vitreous enamel on copper. With successful results, I can use either this China Paint or low-temperature glass enamels to apply imagery on the sheet glass or found factory pressed glass. Typically, glass enamels have a much slower application process and their various mixing mediums dry them out far too quickly. By changing the medium to these natural oils, I can prolong the use of the glass enamels during application and increase the efficiency of their usage, thus speeding up my process. By altering uranium glassware (typically found as factory glass colored with uranium oxide) in this way, I can block out sections of it when it is reacting under a blacklight. While there are glass artists utilizing uranium or phosphorescent glass, such as Erika Tada or Rui Sasaki who create glowing glass work, my goal is to control

how and when it is activated under blacklight and use its unnatural-looking glow to emphasize other fabricated components.

I used these enameling processes in the dining room installation named *Family Dinner*. *Family Dinner* has no walls surrounding it and invites the viewer to come and experience the space up close with work that uses small text and imagery. Everything on the table comes in a set of five, just as on my own kitchen table. There are five chargers, uranium plates, sets of silverware, and fabric napkins. The chargers are raised hydraulically out of copper and each contain highly decorated enamel surfaces. Each plate is different and tells the story of a distinct family member. My father's plate, for example, is about his job in backbreaking labor which is represented as a series of interwoven spinal columns and a script that reads "Rocks and stones may break your bones, but bottles never cure them". This text is a play on the children's rhyme "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" and hints at my father's alcoholism in referring to bottles curing suggested pain. On top of each charger is a smaller, transparent uranium plate that is enameled with more imagery and text on top. My father's uranium plate contains a pattern of bottles, each dripping downward to appear like a series of tears. On every bottle, the words "FORGET" or "FORGIVE" alternate. The plate sets serve a narrative for the viewer to uncover, from my father's addiction to my grandmother's death. Each family member has a secret revealed in the plates, and the uranium glass' glowing reaction to blacklight illuminates this physically.

My mother's charger contains the first of many of the four-line stanzas that I have written for the installations and individual works throughout the exhibition. Each of these poems has the same rhyming scheme (ABCB) and is meant to be read as though part of a children's cooperative hand clapping game since my work discusses childhood memories and dysfunction. These short

poems reference this time period (childhood) where other ABCB rhyme scheme songs and poems, such as the first portion of "Itsy Bitsy Spider", would be sung, read, or performed by or for children. My mother's poem, "she broke the egg / couldn't put it back / said she was sorry / but it started with a crack", is paired with imagery of eggs, cracked and uncracked, which symbolize children and motherhood. Eggs are fragile and commonly used in schools to represent a child for a student to care for. Mothers have an exponential amount of pressure put upon them, and sometimes to preserve what they love most, they smother their children, leaving marks like cracks on an eggshell. The egg drawings also refer to "walking on eggshells", or carefully choosing words as to not upset an easily angered individual. My parent's plates are color coordinated, so their stories become intertwined.

My brother's charger is filled with references to his heart and panic disorder. He is, in many ways, the heart of my family. The text in the center of his plate is a reference to Stephen King's *IT*, a horror novel of children fighting monsters. Author Stephen King states,

> …there aren't any such things as good friends or bad friends – maybe there are just friends, people who stand by you when you're hurt and who help you feel not so lonely. Maybe they're always worth being scared for, and hoping for, and living for. Maybe worth dying for too, if that's what has to be. No good friends. No bad friends. Only people you want, need to be with; people who build their houses in your heart.[2]

The center of my brother's plate reads "some build houses in your heart" and references the last line of this quote to relate him back to this character that is secretly brave and selfless while outwardly nervous. My brother's uranium plate is patterned with hearts that look to be sliced or shifting, agitated, and beating fast. The words "SACRED" and "SCARED" alternate in the heart

[2] King, Stephen. *It*. (New York, Viking, 1986), 817.

pattern. This anagram is meant to symbolize my brother's devotion to the family (sacred) while contrasting it to the fear associated with it (scared).

My charger is patterned with three symbols: inhalers, glasses, and mushrooms. I am asthmatic, and at times I need my inhaler to help me breathe and get through very intense times of anxiety. My glasses are the only way I can physically see the world and I think of them as a distorted perspective. They're thick, often obscured by debris, and absolutely necessary for my survival. The mushroom comes from many places. I was raised in the mushroom capital of the world: Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. My town is a tourist attraction filled with mushroom themed everything from restaurants and stores to art and festivals. There is also a reference to mushroom clouds that blanket the earth upon a nuclear explosion. Another reference comes from Rebecca Rupp's *Committed to Memory* , which states, "memories mushroom in the dark."[3] My uranium plate is another four-line stanza.

My grandmother's charger is covered in a series of ley lines. Ley lines are alignments spanning the entire earth. Although there is much debate over whether ley lines actually exist, some believe them to be connection points between historic or sacred markers around the world. I use them to reference the occult belief that these lines become the areas where spiritual activity is highest and are used for communication with the dead. The uranium plate on top of my grandmother's charger overlays a pattern of nuclear cooling towers, connecting these two means of communication. The cooling tower can also be found in the center of the table, 3D printed and resting in a scalloped piece of uranium glass that I stripped of its pattern through grinding and sanding the glass. The tower is being served like food, and sits in between two resin cast salt and pepper shakers, which glow due to the phosphorescent powder mixed in with the resin.

[3] Rupp, 171.

My embroidery skills were not taught in any strict or structured manner. They were passed down from watching my two grandmothers and my mother stitch for pleasure and the purpose of repair. Embroidery is just another way of drawing, and my stitches become linework that is built up to create thick, textural fiber works. The four embroideries in the living room installation, titled *Irradiated Memories*, are rooms I remember from my maternal grandmother's home. An avid 1960's decorator, my grandmother color-coordinated every room. Her room was the pink room, and the space represented in the installation. The physical chair in the installation comes from that room and is something I have held on to for over a decade since her death. I embroidered a small pillow with the mushroom symbol (home) that rests on it to reflect my relationship with the house. There is a refinished window beside the chair that has sandblasted glass panes. This texture appears foggy, and references back to cloudy memories.

After my grandmother lost her teenage son to a car accident, that house became filled with grief. This grief was everywhere from the boots he was wearing when he died in the corner of the green room to the eternally made bed located in the blue room. The room I stayed in, the yellow room, was unchanged for over twelve years. We were forced to sell the house due to my grandmother's illness. It happened quickly, without any warning given to me, and I have always felt my time there was unfinished. The yellow room embroidery, my room's depiction, remains unfinished and off the wall, resting in the pink chair. Together, the four embroideries are framed by a wooden hoop and a buildup of dripping green yarn. Although the yellow room embroidery remains off the wall, a space remains open for it to be hung.

The basement installation, *Secrets: Resigned // Resilient*, is an enclosure only viewed through a single peephole. This small, obscured window allows the viewers only a warped view of the contents inside. The main focus is a programed light system that switches from three slow

pulses of LED white light and one pulse of UV light. This UV light illuminates all the reactive materials in the room, including slumped and enameled uranium glass plates and various other found uranium objects. On the floor of the space is a contour drawing of my childhood basement, drawn with the same stylistic linework as the other drawings in the exhibition. Items lay on two shelves, paralleling on either side. One side contains items such as food, water, and lifesaving objects. The other side holds objects we need for emotional care, such as pillows, games, and action figures. On the back wall is a laser cut wood sign stating the "BUNKER RULES" which lists things such as "Sharing is Caring" and "Don't Get Attached".

These stories are on display among three home environments for the viewer, who can choose to read closer into the secrets or simply sit back and experience the way certain phosphorescent objects react with the series of lights. For those who choose to explore further, they will find messages of grief, coping, and the hope of receiving a sense of closure. They are ours to bear and to work through. A handmade, watercolor, coptic bound book serves as a companion to the exhibition, filled with poems and illustrations that pair with individual pieces.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

My artistic influences range across various media. There are prominent contemporary metalsmiths who discuss mourning, memories, or domestic spaces; glass artists working with phosphorescent frit; and fiber artists mixing media with traditional embroidery techniques. Conceptually and narratively, I find much inspiration in books that deal with similar issues to my own, such as Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch*, Stephen King's *IT*, and Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects* which all find their protagonists traveling back to the site of their childhood homes or families and finding they can never truly return. In each story, the protagonist manages to locate the part of their childhood that is causing trouble in their adult life and work through it. This relates back to my project where I, like these characters, am seeking closure.

The design of the nuclear cooling towers found throughout the project are based on Three Mile Island's cooling towers one and two. Cooling tower two was the site of America's only nuclear meltdown, and although it did not cause any long-term environmental effects, it went on to be the source of morality debates regarding nuclear power. This event occurred long after the country had already been contaminated by nuclear waste. America's secrecy towards nuclear power is something I find very interesting because it often covers up the extent in which people are being harmed, such as the case with the Hanford Nuclear Site in Washington. This is the location of one of America's most secretive and irradiated places. Secrets often harm those to whom they are not being told to.

Historical

On the Home Front: The Cold War Legacy of the Hanford Nuclear Site, by Michelle Stenehjem Gerber, is a detailed history of the Hanford Nuclear Site, which was America's largest plutonium manufacturing facility. This plutonium was used in the creation of the bombs that

ended World War II, but the nuclear waste left behind was kept secret and remains one of America's most irradiated sites to this day. This book was the first compilation of information on the Hanford site after declassified documents were released in the 1980s and continues to be

updated as time passes to describe the long-term effects of radiation on the land and people living there. Most people who worked at the plant did not know they were making parts for bombs, and nuclear waste was dumped into a ditch in the back of the site [fig. 1][4].

This secrecy surrounding the Hanford Site inspired much of the hidden elements of my installation. For example, the basement enclosure uses a fisheye lens, or peephole, to obscure the viewers perception. As blacklights and LEDS in the room flicker, the viewer is allowed small, distorted observations. Only those who wish to spend more time with the work will be privy to all the information I have presented.

Metal/Enamel

Renée Zettle-Sterling is a metalsmith who addresses themes of death and mourning in her work. Most recently, she has focused on producing an ongoing series that uses paper pulp castings from the body that are then set into larger fabricated wearable sculptures. These paper

[4] Gerber, Michele Stenehjem. *On the home front : The Cold War legacy of the Hanford nuclear site, 3rd Edition*. (United States, University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

casts create lightweight elements that are then colored to look like metal and therefore appear heavy. Giving the appearance of weight to her work calls back to the weight of loss, and Sterling is often photographed with the pieces, holding or interacting with them, to express her actions of outward mourning. Fibers are utilized in this body of work to add story or texture. One work from the *Necklaces of Mourning* series implements clothing from Sterling's deceased brother, as well as silver cast buttons from the same item. [5]

Pieces from Sterling's "Objects of Mourning: Veils" series [fig. 2] takes paper casts of her face to create a shroud between herself and the viewer. This permanent expression masks the wearer's true feelings in the process of grieving. Other works in the series include metal blinders that keep the viewer looking forward, and full head masks that obscure the view completely. Through the action of wearing these objects, this body of work discusses death, typically a forbidden topic, and allows the wearer to adorn themselves with these feelings of grief and to outwardly mourn.

There are untold rules in our society's death rituals. Those who experience loss are often given a short window of time to grieve. A loved one dies, and family can cry or express their

[5] Zettle-Sterling, Renée. "Objects of Mourning: Veils". Renée Zettle-Sterling Metalsmith.

sadness. At the funeral, everyone is expected to mourn, but the immediate family is supposed to grieve the most. After the funeral, life resumes, and those around you cannot see that life is still on pause for those in mourning. These death rituals that we practice are not beneficial to the healing process because they are stunted and often pushed aside to continue with work or life expectations. They also punish those who mourn for too long or for longer than what is perceived as expected for those outside immediate family. For example, someone is expected to mourn the loss of a sibling longer than the loss of an uncle. I created this exhibition to honor those I had lost and to give myself the time to grieve as I create the work with the goal of achieving a sense of closure.

Mi-Sook Hur is an enamellist most well known for her painting style of enameling. Her work in enamel and metalsmithing references childhood memories using imagery such as natural objects, feathers, and birds [fig. 3]. The enameled feathers, and especially the birds, appear as dark, looming illustrations, which invoke a sense of mystery or sadness. Hur's imagery is bold in line but conceptually very concealed, requiring more information from the artist (such as statements or descriptions) to fully understand the iconography. References to childhood or home are represented many times through the image or form of the beansprout. This becomes a repeated shape or exaggerated structure carried through

the body of work, “Beansprout”. When referring to Hur’s reoccurring themes she states, “The images of feathers, seeds, sprouts, beans, birds, etc. that I use for my work resembled my experiences as a child. They are grains of my spirit as if made of countless fragments, and my works serve as containers of my thoughts.”[6] This iconography allows Hur to create a variety of vessels, wearable sculptures, and containers while the icon activates or changes their narratives. Similar to Mi-Sook Hur, I utilize the mushroom in my work, and draw them as caricatures of my hometown’s logo. I create a variety of iconography to narrate the work and use graphic lines to illustrate them. Using symbols allows me to tell a much larger story in smaller, easily consumable portions. Text or written word is combined in my work to influence or help decode the icons. In this way, I allow for private information to be exposed but still retaining a small shroud of secrecy to keep the viewer searching for answers.

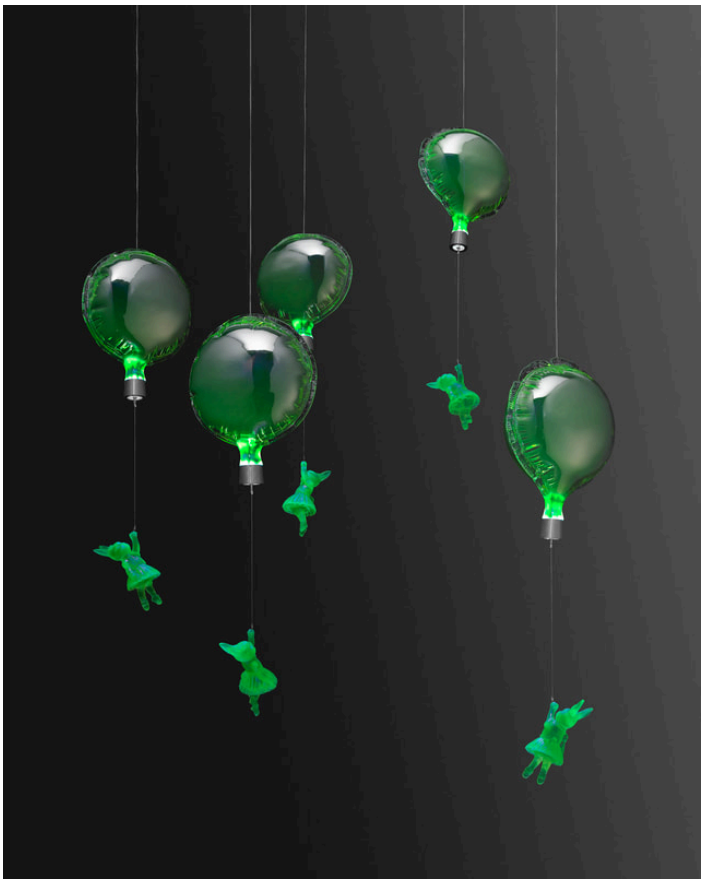
Marylin de Silva’s portfolio consists of a variety of metalwork, fabricated, cast, and raised, to create small scenes that are then colored with oil-based colored pencils [fig. 4]. The metal becomes highly pigmented while still appearing natural in color and holding on to a strong sense of realism. Her mark making is distinct and recognizable throughout her many bodies of work due to its style of application and color palette. She uses subject matter that you find in a

[6] The Enamel Arts Foundation. “Mi-Sook Hur.”

domestic sphere such as teapots, chairs, and potted plants. Marylin de Silva's work uses color application to push smoother forms into recognizable natural subjects with an impression of depth. She achieves this with many layers of detailed and blended coloring.

I am inspired by her work when coloring a fabricated metal object because the surface treatment becomes the focus of the work. The way it is applied transforms it from smooth to textured and realistic. Silva's color schemes are also very unsaturated, which, while making them more representative, can make them appear aged. This is significant to my own processes, as my color palette is slightly muted, contrasting the vibrant or bold pops of color associated with more contemporary work.

Glass



Erika Tada is a glass artist who discusses childhood memories. Her most recent work from the series *Dream of White Night* [fig. 5] implements cast uranium glass that becomes active under blacklight. Tada uses a small rabbit to symbolize childhood, and pairs it with blown uranium glass balloons. The pieces are displayed with blacklight LEDs inside each balloon, so that together they appear almost like a floating dreamscape. Tada's work is an excellent example of utilizing uranium glass because the hidden LEDs illuminate the body of work to appear as though they are glowing on their own.

When planning out the use of my own uranium glass, careful consideration is given to where each blacklight is located and how it will interact with the space and the objects. The glow of the illuminated uranium glass gives off an otherworldly feel, which is what I hope to bring to my work.

Rui Sasaki, a glass artist from Japan, explores the idea of loss in relation to the separation from her home country, and asks questions about what home really means. Her work plays with empty spaces (physical and emotional), memories and nostalgia. Her work uses phosphorescent glass that illuminates dark spaces and creates a sense of wonder. In *Weather Chandelier* [fig. 6], Sasaki uses the reactive glass to create a chandelier that is installed outside to charge by day and glow by night. Sasaki's illuminated spaces caused me to think about other phosphorescent materials besides the uranium glass. Uranium oxides just glow a yellowish green, while other materials, such as various illuminated frits, can glow in a range of colors. I experimented with highlighter fluid and tonic water, two liquids that are reactive under blacklight. Highlighter fluids can be leached into flowers to cause a variety of glowing effects, and tonic water can be added to transparent foods like gelatin and candy to also create an illuminated experience.

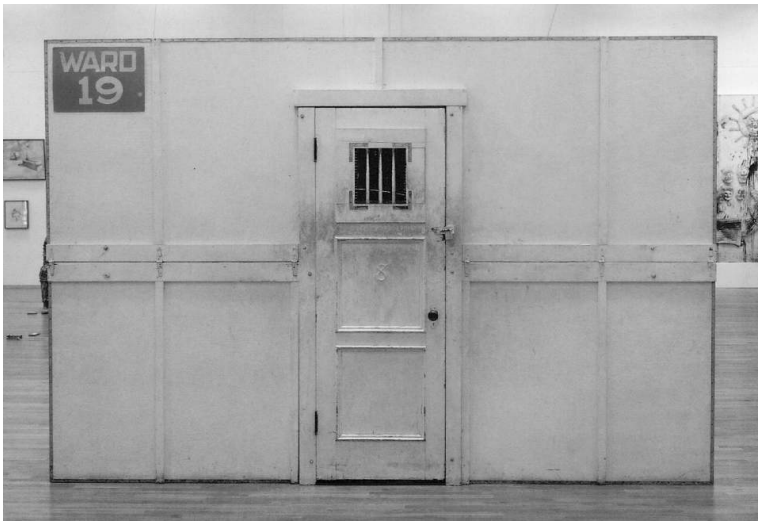
Fiber

It is common to find metalsmiths who utilize other media in their work, as our fabrication techniques allow for a wide range of materials to be set into metal forms. Vanessa Neily is a metalsmith, enamelist, and fiber artist. She uses drilled metal canvases to create rug

hookings and watercolor enameled wall works. Her patterns and color schemes are very distinct, with color coordinated fiber matching delicate, enameled botanical paintings, and sometimes diverge into other forms such as small furniture. The wall works typically take the form of a flat, ovular shape, referencing an embroidery hoop [fig. 7]. She drills holes along the interior and the center of the piece, and the fiber structure is sewn in. Neily's work often examines the home and family. Neily's work inspired a variety of methods to frame embroidery with metal and enamel, but also combines the two seamlessly into one cohesive piece. The enamel also color coordinates back to the embroidery floss, which makes the smoother glossy surface of the glass blend into the textured fibers. Neily's work is a dynamic way to combine both fiber and metal. Her wall structures offered me a few ideas on how to hang embroidery, as well as connect the two media without the use of additional frames.

Installation

American sculptor, Edward Kienholz, is known for his life size installations known as tableaux. These works consist of both found and created pieces which discuss taboo and controversial topics such as religion, greed, poverty, sex, racism, abortion, and hate crimes, among many others. In Kienholz's *The State Hospital* the viewer is given a large white box to look into, which revealed a disturbing scene of two assumed patients lying in bunk beds. Their faces are replaced with fishbowls and their emaciated bodies appear to be at rest. It was meant to reflect and call attention to America's disregard for those in the prison system. The sculpture itself is already very powerful, but the box around it adds an assumed mystery of what is inside, causing the viewer to want a closer look [fig. 8]. The bars of the open window serve as a portal into this created world but also function as added information about the narrative being discussed.



In my own work, I created the bunker/basement space, *Secrets*, to function as a created space with mostly found objects that were used to reveal a bit more about the dysfunction going on in the exhibition's

ongoing narrative [fig. 9]. The piece itself was a very plain, white, eight-by-six-foot box with wood paneling and a white door. It does not give away much information except for an embroidery on the side of a mushroom cloud and a shiny scalloped ring of brass on the door surrounding a peephole. This hole is my own portal into the space, and like Kienholz, I use it to try and force the viewer into a longer interaction with the piece.

Memory

Rebecca Rupp's book, *Committed to Memory: How We Remember and Why We Forget,* discusses how the brain processes memories. This text uses both documented experiences and scientific studies to explore memory and its various stages. The section on forgetting examines how the mind can rewrite memories based on pictures, other people's memories, and descriptions of places, people or objects[7]. This project began as an attempt to cling to memories I feared I was losing. Reading about how memories are always in a state of flux and very often not reliable allowed me free myself of the burden that comes with trying to recreate a space that no longer exists. I became free to build an idealized home space centered around what I remembered and filled with items and symbols that represented these feelings of these spaces without becoming a complete replica. The significance of this is the basis for my project. Remembering exactly is impossible and attempting to do so is frustrating. I allowed the work to become a little less specific to my experiences to allow viewers the opportunity to relate.

[7] Rupp, 176.

IMAGES

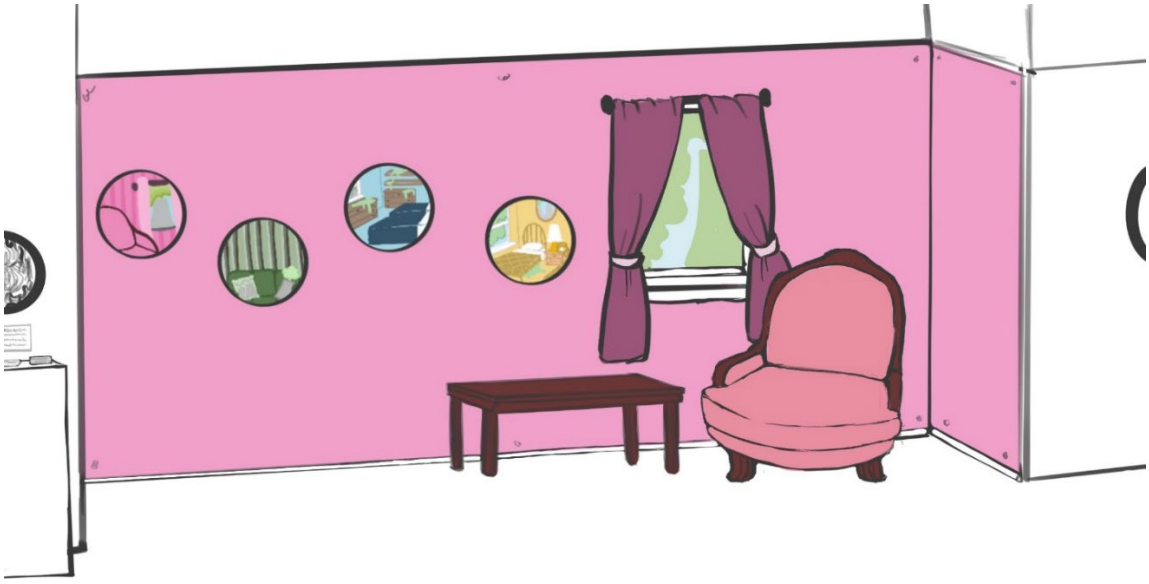


Fig. 10

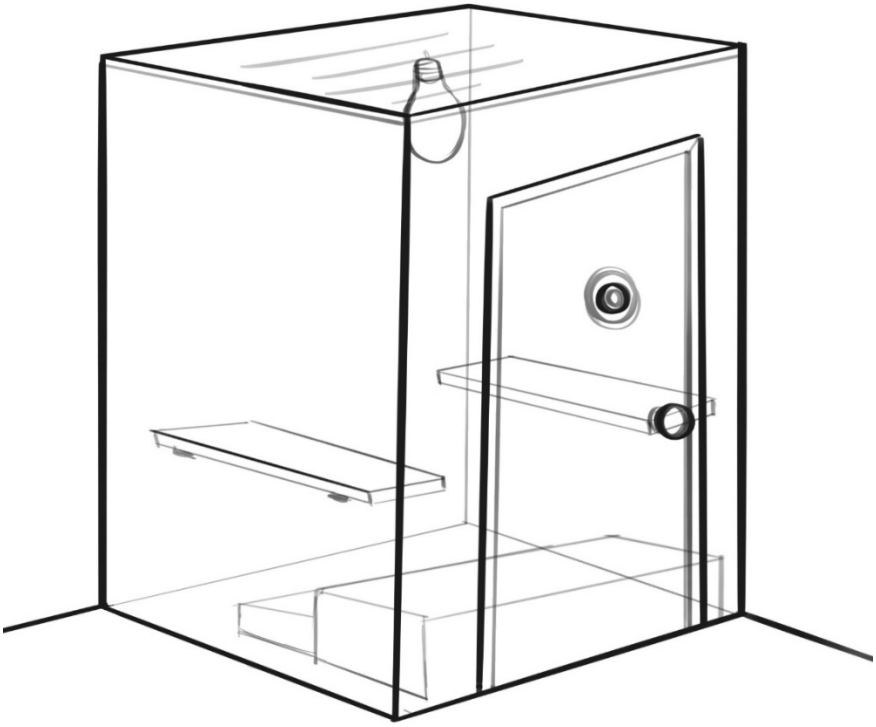


Fig. 11

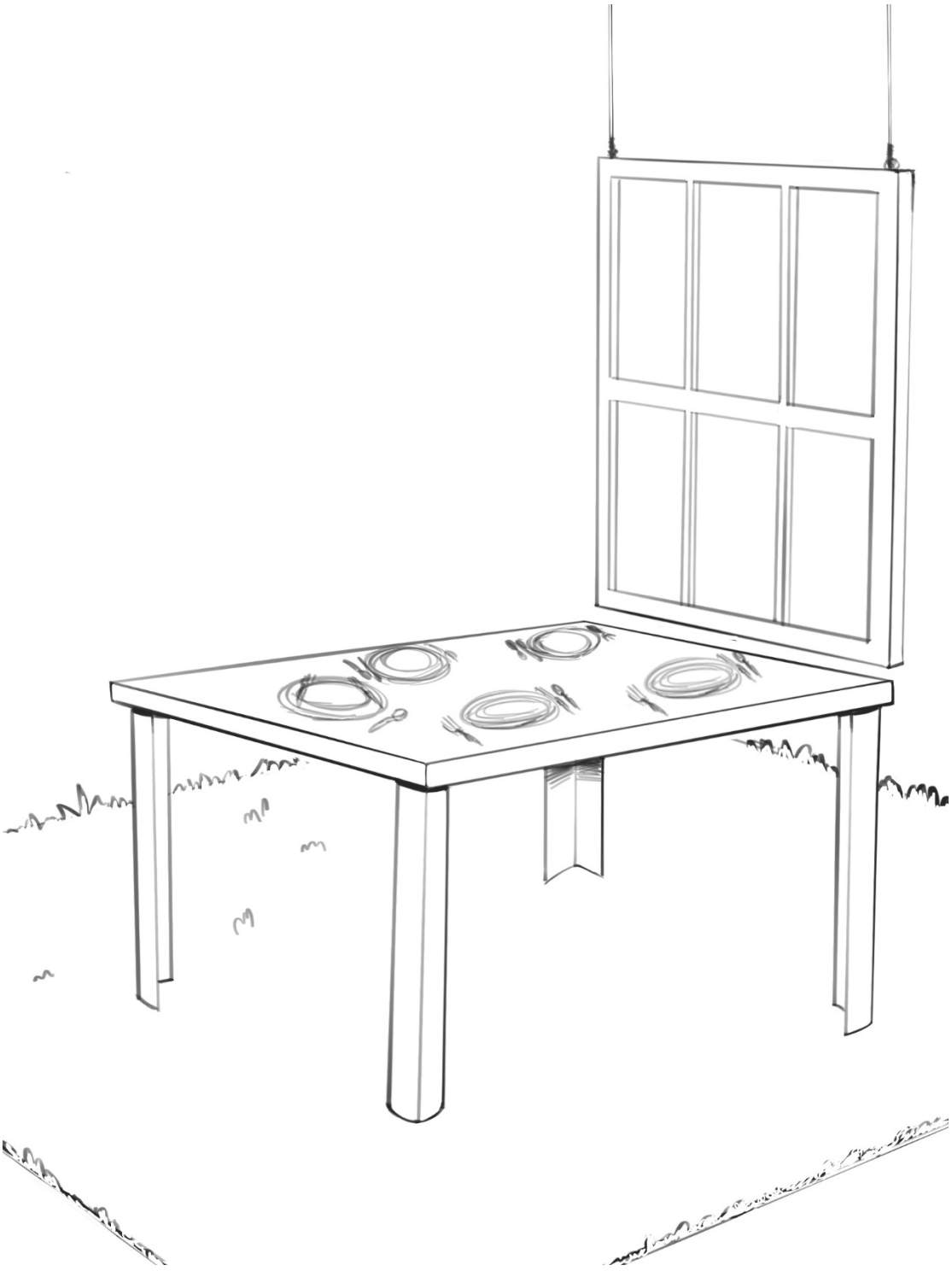


Fig. 12

Fig.13

Fig. 14

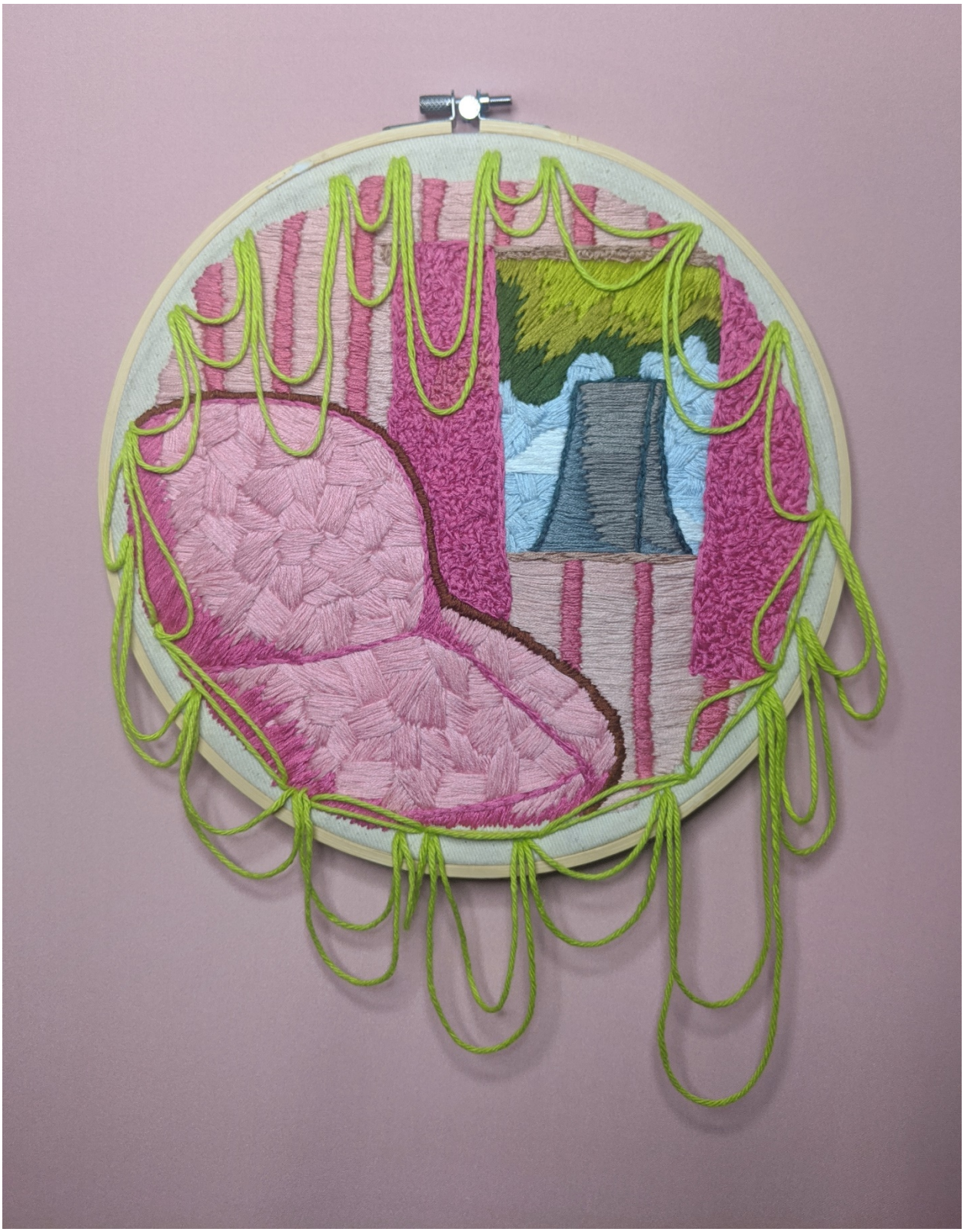


Fig. 15

Fig. 16

Fig. 17

Fig. 18


BUNKER RULES
1. Sharing is caring.
2. Don't get attached.
3. No crying.
4. Find your comfort.
5. Safe is Home.

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Fig. 19

Fig. 20

Fig. 21

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

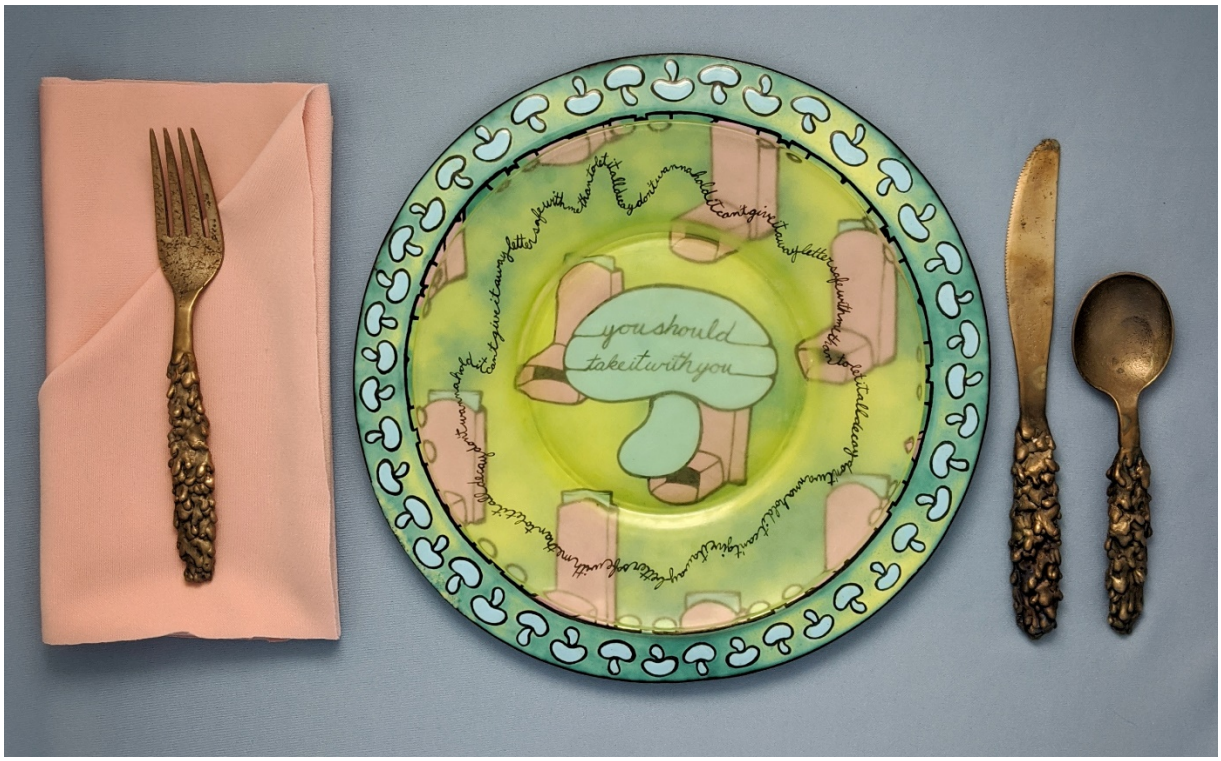

Fig. 24

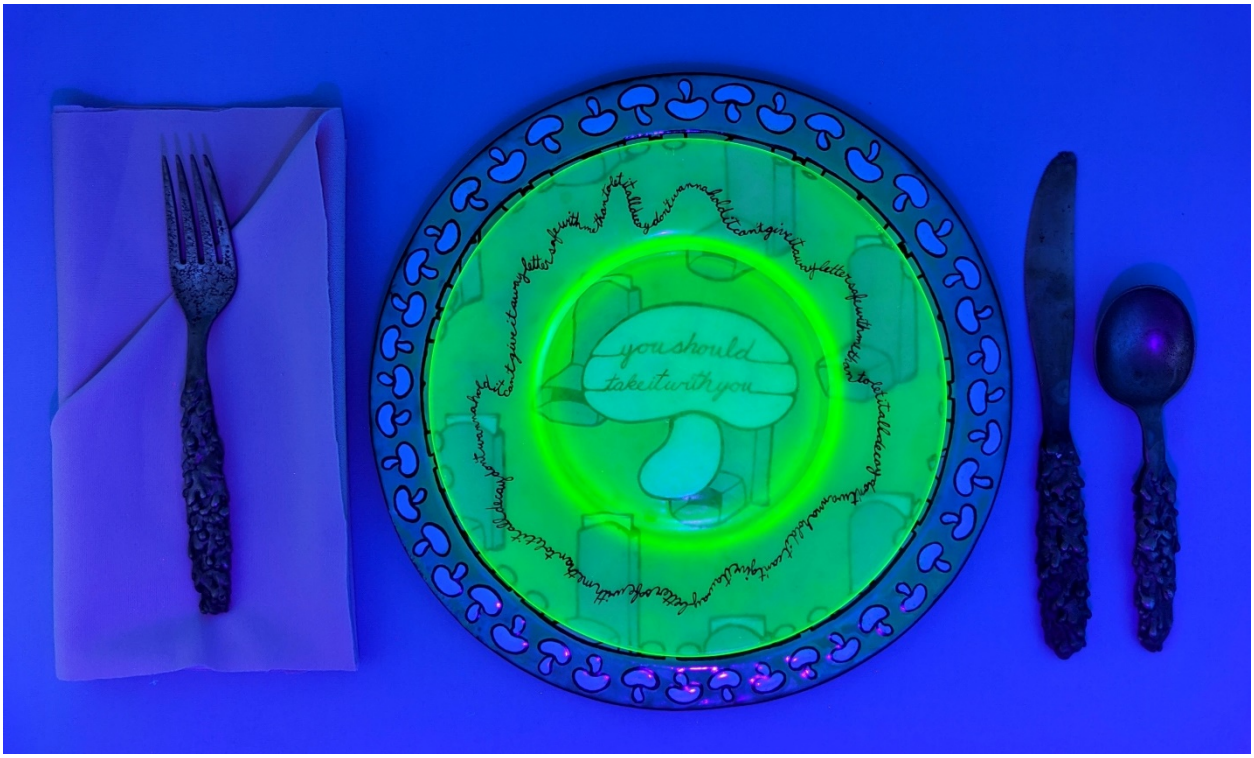

Fig. 25

Fig. 26


somebuild
houses
in your
heart
SACRED
SCARED

Fig. 27


somebuild
houses
in your
heart
SACRED
SCARED

Fig. 28

Fig. 29


she broke the egg
couldn't put it back
said she was sorry
but it started with a
crack
HURT · HEART · HURT · HEART · HURT · HEART ·


she broke the egg
couldn't put it back
said she was sorry
but it started with a
crack
HURT · HEART · HURT · HEART · HURT · HEART · HURT · HEART · HURT · HEART · HURT · HEART

Fig. 31


rocks and stones
broke your bones
but bottles never care them

Fig. 32


FORGET
FORGIVE
rocks and stones
broke your bones

Fig. 33


FORGET
FORGIVE
rocks and stones
broke your bones

Fig. 34

Fig. 35

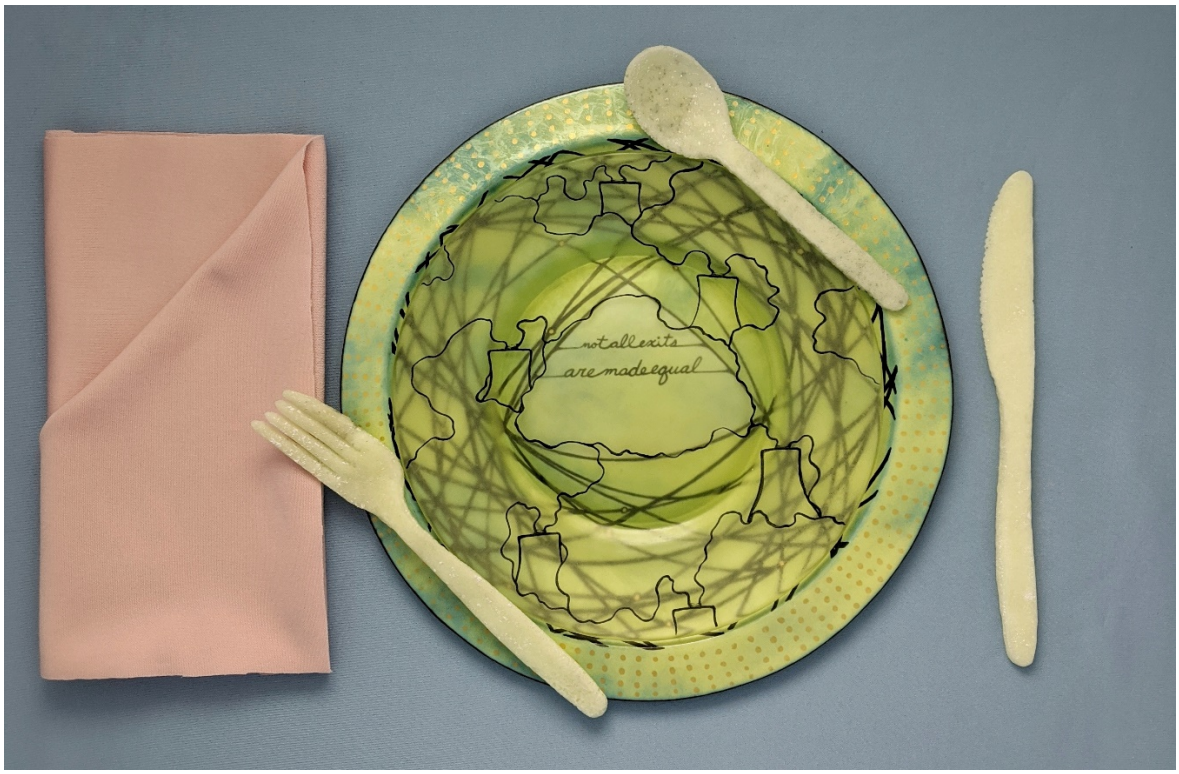

Fig. 36

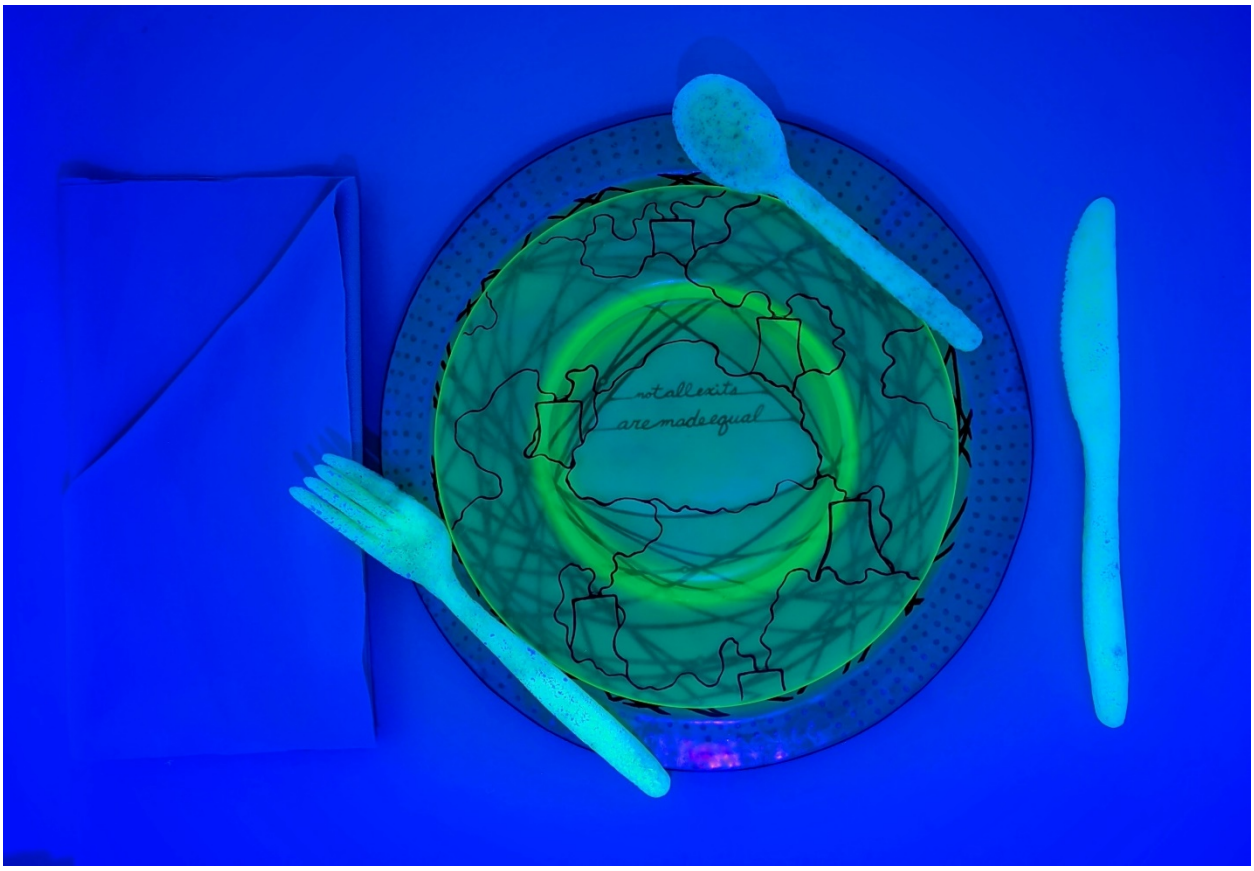

Fig. 37

Fig. 38

Fig. 39

Fig. 40

Fig. 41

Fig. 42

Fig. 43

Fig. 44

Fig. 45

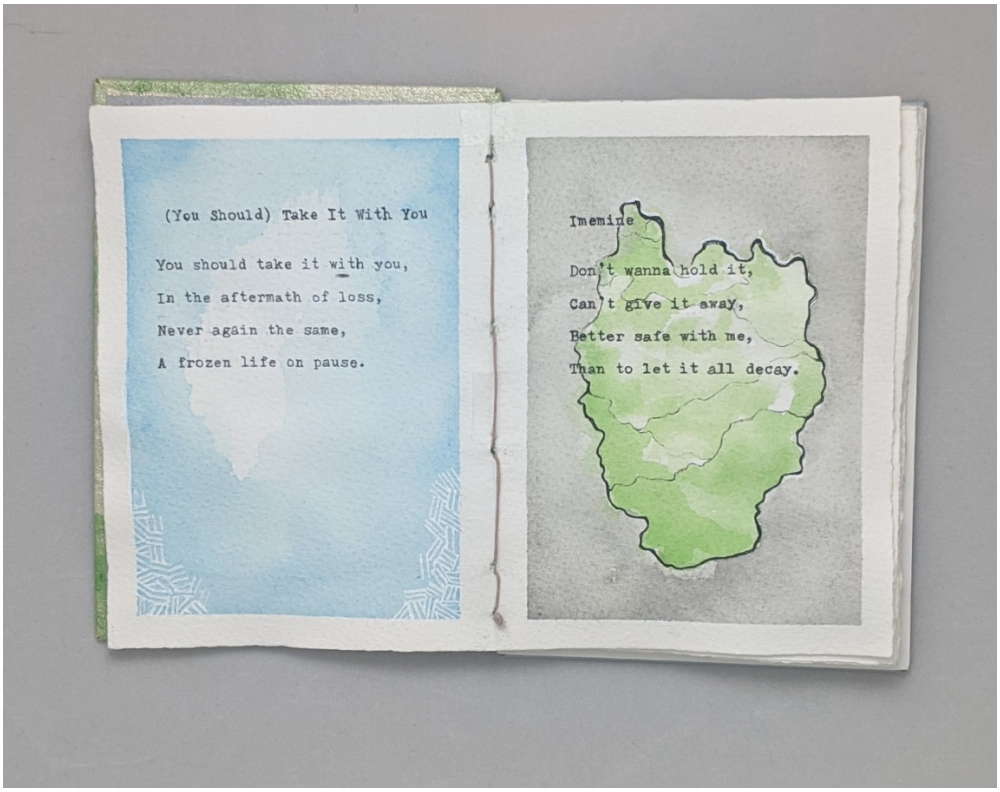
(You Should) Take It With You
You should take it with you,
In the aftermath of loss,
Never again the same,
A frozen life on pause.
Imemine
Don't wanna hold it,
Can't give it away,
Better safe with me,
Than to let it all decay.

Fig. 46


Heavy
Your chair is empty,
But heavier than the rest,
I want to take the plate,
But there s a tugging in my
chest.
Cracking
She broke the egg,
Couldn't put it back,
Said she was sorry,
But it started with a crack.

Fig. 47


Forgive//Forget
Rocks and stones,
Broke your bones,
But bottles never cure them.
FORGIVE
FORGIVE
FORGET
Scared//Sacred
Some build houses,
In your heart,
Care for them,
And help them start.

Fig.48


Not All Exits Are Made Equal
Your exit was long,
And full of grief,
Your exit was long,
But our time felt brief.
irradiated
memories

Fig. 49


The Pink Room
In the secret space,
Where my memories cloud and fuzz.
The room I never entered,
Where shaking fingers buzz.
The Green Room
Stale air lines the walls,
Striped and green,
His boots in the corner,
Left to be seen.

Fig. 50

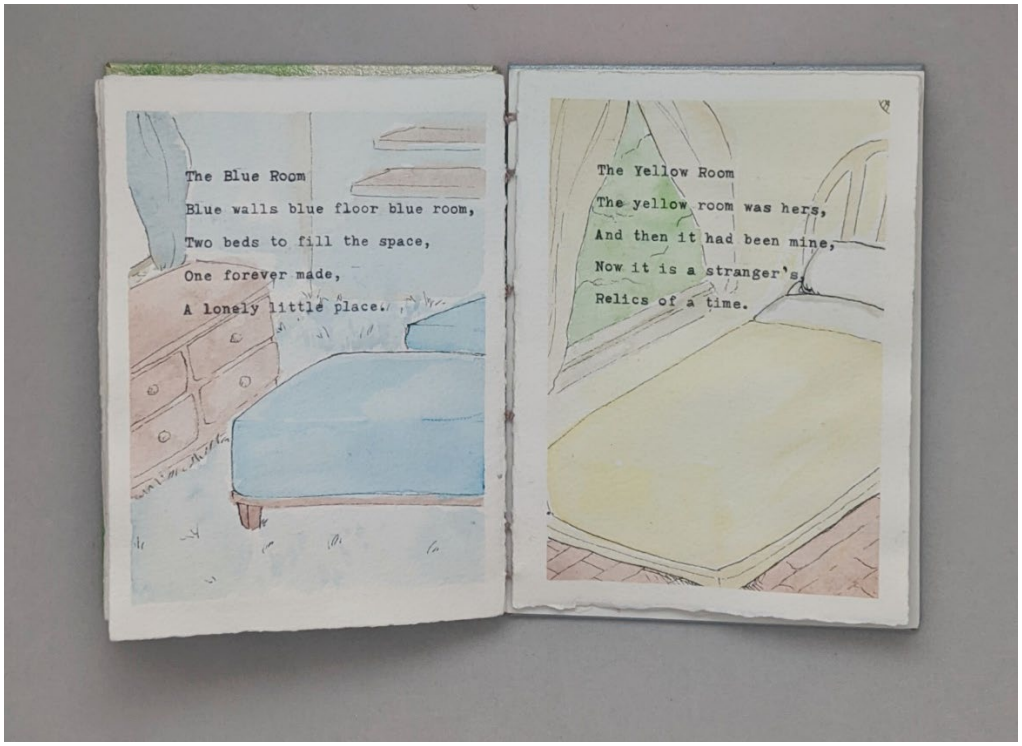
The Blue Room
Blue walls blue floor blue room,
Two beds to fill the space,
One forever made,
A lonely little place.
The Yellow Room
The yellow room was hers,
And then it had been mine,
Now it is a stranger's,
Relics of a time.

Fig. 51

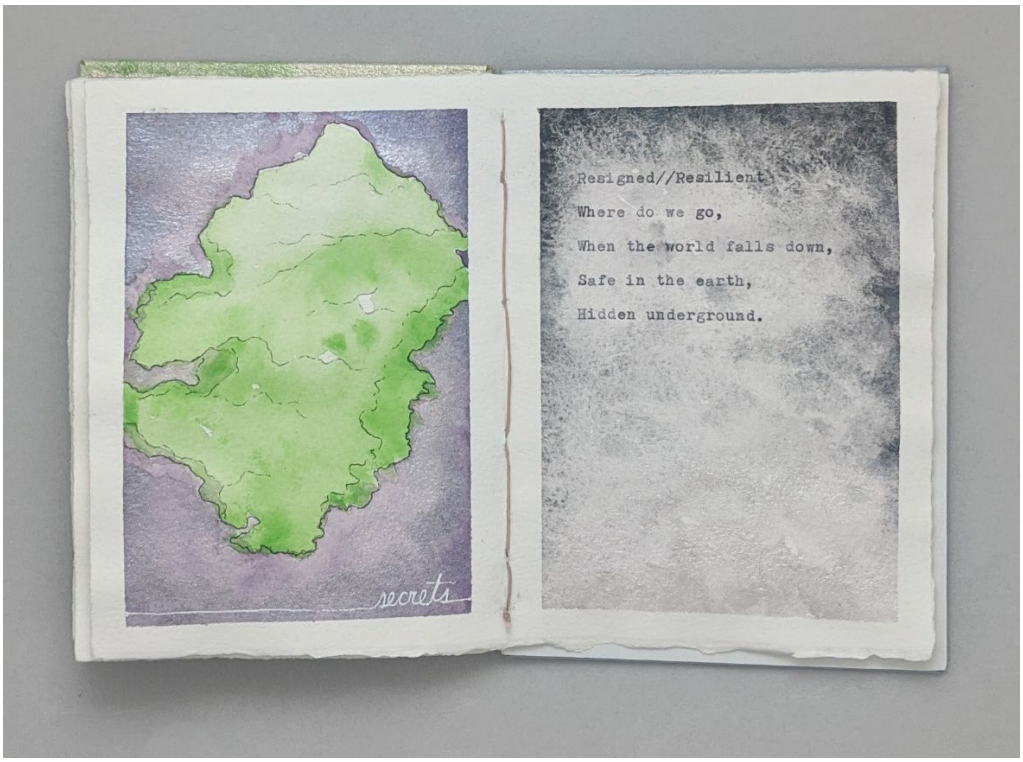
secrets
Resigned//Resilient
Where do we go,
When the world falls down,
Safe in the earth,
Hidden underground.

Fig. 52

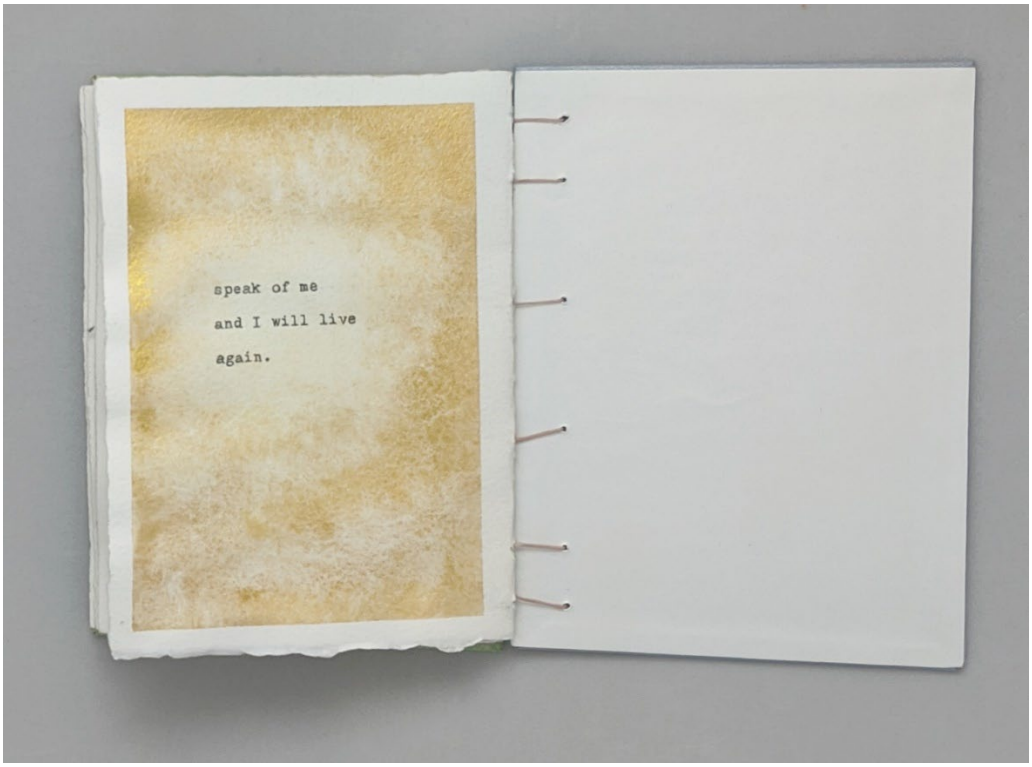
speak of me
and I will live
again.

Fig. 53

LIST OF IMAGES

CONCLUSION

(*You Should) Take It With You* explores memories, loss, grief, and family dynamics. In my field, similar themes are touched upon, but always with more indirect or obscured methods. I choose to discuss my family's dysfunction and grief in a very direct way, layering information throughout the exhibition for the audience to discover. Family secrets are often kept "in the family" and buried with the dead. In my work, I am choosing to open up and reveal this private information, I become both vulnerable by the reveal, and empowered by my ownership. My experiences are not unique, as I have mentioned previously. To viewers in similar family dynamics, they will express empathy, and to those that are not, a sense of sympathy.

The home is an important concept to me as a maker, as knowing where home is becomes comforting and safe. When my sense of home is lost or broken, I regain some of this stability in making work. The symbols I formulate act as a buffer between my personal narrative and my audience. I have put my story on display, but my viewer can choose whether or not they wish to uncover it. To actually engage with the work they have to want to understand the details of the story. The nuclear cooling towers come with negative connotations, but when it is placed in this home setting it allows for new connections to be made.

Placing this work in its site-specific installations allowed me to curate my objects. By using a blank gallery to create the spaces my pieces reside in, I avoid any conflicting histories that come with using an established setting. This creative project serves as my method of dealing with grief and moving forward and I hope to encourage others to become more willing to discuss these sensitive topics.

EXHIBITION STATEMENT

(You Should) Take It With You

Emily Pellini

(You Should) Take It With You is a site-specific installation that consists of three rooms and functions as a means of closure after losing loved ones. Our time of mourning is often brief and unsatisfactory. By creating a space that challenges and works through this grief, I find myself able to let go of heavy burdens such as guilt or secrets. The layers of information in the first room are an eating area with a large table and five chairs. On each place setting lies fabric napkin, an illustrative enameled copper charger plate, an altered uranium glass plate, and bronze casted silverware. Individual chargers contain specific images and text for each member of immediate family, and the transparent uranium plates overlay additional patterns.

The living room is a fabricated room, constructed into the recessed space of the gallery. This room is based on childhood memories of my late maternal grandmother's room, which was painted and decorated in various shades of pink. On the wall is a series of four embroideries which depict other rooms in the house. A fogged window inside the room depicts a cloudy state of mind. My grandmother's pink chair, a family item I have held on to protectively, is featured in the room with a handmade pillow featuring my mushroom symbol for home.

The last room is an enclosed, eight-foot-square room with a door. The door contains a peephole with a fisheye glass lens. The lens distorts the viewer's perceptions of the room. Inside is the drawing of my childhood basement on the floor and walls containing food and knick-knacks, laser cut signage, nuno felting, and altered uranium glass objects. An LED flickers on and off and changes to blacklight every forth pulse to illuminate phosphorescent glass and paint in the space. Each room is meant to tell its own story and reflect back on who and what were lost, and how we have taken their memories with us.

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